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MEMORANDUM:

SUBJECT : Yugoslav-Soviet Relations: The Effects of the Cominformist Affair

The outcome of the Cominformist plot in Yugoslavia has been shaped by two factors. They are

- Tito's strong initial inclination to suppress the whole affair, and
- Moscow's unaccountable refusal to accommodate Yugoslav demands that it stop supporting such activities. The Soviet penchant for accompanying rapprochement with business as usual in the espionage arena made it impossible for Tito to keep the lid on.

One of the prime motives underlying Tito's rapprochement with Moscow has been his desire to ensure the survival of Yugoslavia's independence and its peculiar brand of socialism. Relations with the Kremlin had to be composed, he calculated, in order to leave his successors as free as possible from the prospect of Soviet interference. By November 1973, so much progress had been made that Tito came home from his Kiev visit to tell his subordinates he trusted Brezhnev. In Sarajevo last April, just as his security services were stumbling onto the Cominformist plot, he publicly proclaimed that there was no threat to Yugoslavia from the East.

As the evidence of Soviet complicity in the affair mounted, Tito's growing anger was more than balanced by his overriding concern to preserve the warm relationship he had built with the Kremlin. Resisting the clamor among his subordinates to reveal the plot, he chose instead to protest repeatedly, but privately, to Moscow, in both party and government channels. Receiving no satisfaction, he sent Edvard Kardelj off to Moscow to discuss the matter with Brezhnev. This in itself was a signal of Belgrade's seriousness; it was Kardelj who had gone to Moscow in 1948 to stand up to Stalin. 25X1

SECRET

That Kardelj's mission failed is clearly evident in Tito's blistering revelation of the whole Cominformist affair two days after Kardelj got home. In the six weeks since Tito's speech, Belgrade has

-- seen to it that both its own people and the West are fully aware that the Soviets have been caught meddling in Yugoslavia's internal affairs, but

-- tried to avoid any further downturn in relations with Moscow by keeping things as placid as possible on the surface.

Beneath the surface, however, there are signs that the Yugoslavs are increasingly uneasy on two scores. In the short run, they fear that in the Cominformist affair they have only seen the tip of the iceberg. Belgrade's allegations that the plotters were trying to rally support from other anti-Tito factions suggest its suspicion that the Soviets are conducting other, more sophisticated operations that the security services have not yet uncovered.

Beyond that, Yugoslavia's policymakers must consider anew the vital question of Soviet intentions after Tito dies. They will see in Moscow's demonstrated willingness to meddle before he goes, and its refusal to give guarantees for the future, convincing evidence that the Kremlin's distaste for Titoism remains as strong as ever. This perception, buttressed by their recognition that the "trust relationship" between Belgrade and Moscow has been shattered, will shape Yugoslavia's policies for some time to come.

What will be done may, in fact, have been decided last week, when both internal and foreign policy were evidently subjected to a thoroughgoing review at three separate sessions of the collective state presidency.

On the domestic scene, we expect a continued tightening of internal security as the regime cracks down on extremists of every stripe including, for balance, liberal dissidents. The prime concern will be to prevent the coalescence of any pro-Soviet opposition that could seize on post-Tito turmoil to invite the kind of "fraternal assistance" that Moscow extended to anti-Dubcek elements in Czechoslovakia.

SECRET

25X1

Tightened security will probably be accompanied by increased attention to defense, and particularly to Yugoslavia's "All People's Defense" concept of national partisan warfare. The most recent sign of this was the creation last week of a new Council of National Defense with Tito as its chairman.

Relations with Moscow will continue to be cooler but still correct, unless the Yugoslavs ferret out still more evidence that the Soviets have been poking about in their affairs.

Should such further activity come to light, Belgrade conceivably might conclude that it needed to insure against Soviet pressure by improving relations with the West. For now, matters have not gone this far. In dealing with Moscow, the Yugoslavs still rely on the protection supposedly provided by allies in the Communist movement, on the support of the non-aligned, and most of all on their own abilities.

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